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Wizard And Glass: The Dark Tower, Book 4



Synopsis

In this fourth volume, Roland, Eddie, Susannah, and Jake survive Blaine the Mono's final crash, only to find themselves stranded in an alternate version of Topeka, Kansas, one that has been ravaged by the superflu virus. While following the deserted I-70 toward a distant glass palace, Roland recounts a story about a seaside town called Hambry, where he fell in love with a girl named Susan Delgado, and where he and his old tet-mates Alain and Cuthbert battled the forces of John Farson, the harrier who - with a little help from a seeing sphere called Maerlyn's Grapefruit - ignited Mid-World's final war.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"Wizard and Glass," Volume IV of Stephen King's fantasy/western "Dark Tower" series is even better than the three books which preceded it. I didn't think it would be possible to top "The Wastelands," Book III, but King has accomplished the task with great elan. The author's tremendous talents and consistency as a writer are evident here. I can only advise the reader not to begin this novel during a busy period in your life, as it will cause you to miss all sorts of deadlines. I really found it difficult to put this page-turner down. The novel opens with a wrap-up of the cliffhanger which began in Book Three, where bizarre Blaine, the psychotic, riddle-loving monorail tries to take the stoic Gunslinger and his companions on a suicide trip to a terminal destination. Given the dark humor, it's a really fun ride. The band of four...and a half, the Gunslinger, Eddie, Susannah, Jake and their talking dog-like pet, Oy the Bumbler, disengage from the wreckage of Blaine, and continue along the path of the Beam toward the Dark Tower. They finally take a rest, around a campfire,

while Roland narrates the details of his quest, the whys and wherefores behind his decision to take this particular course. He tells the tragic tale of his lost love, Susan, and his beloved friends and companions Cuthbert and Alain, who all formed a magnificent Ka-tet, (King's word for a group of people drawn together by fate). These characters have been brought up in prior novels and all played a formidable role in Roland's past life...one which will haunt him to the ends of the changing world. "Wizard and Glass" is more a traditional fantasy novel than the other, more darkly fantastic books in the series.

Wizard and Glass is not only the best book in the Dark Tower series, it may well be the best Stephen King book I've ever read. It is grand, operatic, vivid, a story worthy of Tolkien, throbbing with atmosphere, and aching with the shattered soul and broken heart of the story's principal character, Roland Deschain, the last Gunslinger. This tale of first love, and that love's tragic loss, forms the centerpiece of the novel, which begins where *The Waste Lands* left off, with Roland and co. trapped on Blaine (the Pain), engaged in a riddling contest (shades of Bilbo and Gollum!) for their very lives. They defeat Blaine (how I won't say, but it's a moment that beats hell out of every time Captain Kirk ever overloaded a mad computer), and soon discover they've somehow jumped dimensions (another side effect of the Tower's failing), and have wound up in the world of *The Stand* -- a moment so chilling I got goosepimples. Really! Of course, given that rambunctious Randy Flagg has now become the villain of this piece, this bit of dimension switching should hardly come as a surprise -- but it's nevertheless fascinating. Roland and co. travel on in this deserted world, finding evidence of both Mother Abigail and the Dark Man (as well as the Crimson King from *Insomnia*), and soon encounter a "thinny" -- a warp between dimensions that is like a mosquito with a thousand-watt amplifier buzzing in one's ear. This triggers in Roland a flashback -- and most of the next 550 pages are spent in the days of Roland's youth, just after he defeated Cort. He is sent by his father -- along with companions Cuthbert and Alain -- to the sleepy sea community of Mejis.

This book has a big fat disappointment nestling in it. I'm hoping that, if I tell you about it now, you will enjoy it a little more than I did, and perhaps give it the four stars it really deserves rather than the three I've settled with. This is a flash-back novel. It's not a bad thing in itself, but when you've read the first three instalments and left on a cliff hanger, you'd better hope that the momentum keeps up! It does - we get the resolution of the story segment truncated in "*The Waste Lands*", and it's a good one too. We get a little more as well. And then we get about five hundred pages of flashback, returning to Roland's youth and his - don't get me wrong - very interesting adventures. But these

aren't the characters we've come to invest our hopes and emotions in; it's barely even the same Roland, the period of time between them is so great. So you're not reading Dark Tower 4, you're reading that tie-in novel that you probably would have picked up anyway, provided it's second-hand and in good condition. King shamefully weaves it into the fourth novel - or more accurately, plonks it right in the middle - so that the frame of the story, in which the adventures of Roland, Odetta (or Suzanna), Eddie and Jake continue, is something that we have to read so that we're not missing stuff. Really, he should have put the opening on the end of the last book, and the ending on the start of the next, and let us in on the secret that this is not entirely relevant to the story we're reading. It's like cruising at 90mph only to have to take a little detour around a school at 20mph before you can start picking up speed again. Don't misunderstand - it's a good book. It's worth reading. But it feels a little like filler and doesn't have enough of the characters we really want.

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